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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 001913

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2019

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SUBJECT: (U) YASENI UPBEAT ON CAMPAIGN, WILL FILE ELECTORAL
COMPLAINTS AGAINST KARZAI

REF: KABUL 1640

Classified By: Political Counselor Annie Pforzheimer reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Ambassador Eikenberry met with presidential candidate and Lower House Deputy Speaker Mirwais Yaseni on July 12 to discuss the state of the presidential campaign. Yaseni was energized, crediting the Ambassador's appearance with him at a June press event (reftel) for boosting his campaign's visibility. Yaseni believes he had strong operations in Kabul, Nangarhar (his home province), and Herat, but is still struggling to support his national campaign infrastructure, which has grown to 29 field offices. The Ambassador reiterated that the US does not provide covert or overt support to any individual candidate, and stated USG support for the process of a credible, secure, and inclusive election trumped any personalities in the race. Yaseni accepted the answer, saying "we will struggle with this (financial situation), but keep going."

12. (C) Yaseni said he has submitted or was prepared to submit complaints to the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) regarding President Karzai supporters' alleged use of intimidation and government resources to aid his reelection campaign. Our contacts at the ECC so far have not confirmed whether the complaints have been filed. Yaseni believes NDS Deputy Director Abdullah Laghmani presented the most serious security threat to his campaign, pointing to the assassination almost two weeks ago of the brother of MP Zefnoon Safi (Laghman, Pashtun), who is supporting Yaseni's campaign. Yaseni claimed Laghmani was involved in the killing.

13. (C) The Ambassador encouraged Yaseni to continue to use Afghan institutions such as the ECC to resolve election grievances and seek the means to level the playing field for all credible candidates. If Afghan institutions prove to be lacking in any of these regards, the international community could assist those institutions to provide a better response, as it has on the issues of candidate security, transportation, and access to the media.

14. (C) Yaseni again asserted that he is the strongest challenger to Karzai should the election go to a second round because Abdullah Abdullah has limited appeal outside of the Tajik community and Ashraf Ghani is struggling to attract any support. Yaseni believes only he could hold on to his base and consolidate votes from the other campaigns if given a chance to go head-to-head with Karzai in a hypothetical second round.
EIKENBERRY